

' The most curious book ever written perhaps is the *Memoirs* of James II. . . . By his own showing he was a very weak fellow ; but he had great skill nevertheless, for the head of a department. His arrangements at the Ordnance were excellent. When I was Master-General I brought it back very much to what he had made it/ ¹ • Therefore, for Macaulay to assert that James ' would have made a respectable clerk in the dockyard at Chatham ² is to be unjust to the King.

On the other hand all the new evidence available confirms Macaulay's verdict that James's ' understanding was singularly slow and narrow'. His character is perhaps best revealed in the letters written to his friends before he became king.³ He expressed himself with freedom, both to the Prince of Orange and to George Legge, afterwards Lord Dartmouth. Portions of his correspondence with them were accessible to Macaulay.⁴

These letters throw no new light on the character of James, but they make his attitude clearer and more certain. They show the reality of his attachment to his religion, and the firmness with which he refused to abandon it for any worldly advantage. He wrote to Legge : ' You are a man of conscience, as well as honnor, do but thinke what a base

¹ Stanhope, *Notes of Conversations with, the Duke of Wellington*, p. 66.

² 1, 440 (iv).

³The letters of James to the Prince of Orange from October 1678 to November 1679 were printed by the Hist. MSS. Comm. in the Report on the Savile Foljambe MSS. (1897); the majority of these were, however, printed by Dalrymple from the originals among the domestic State Papers and now calendared. For the years 1677-84, there are the letters printed in Groen van Prinsterer's Archives . . . de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Ser. II, vol. v. James's letters to George Legge, Earl of Dartmouth, covering the period 1679-82 and 1688, are in volume i of the Dartmouth MSS. ; those addressed to the Duke of Queensberry (1682-85) are in the Buccleuch MSS. at Drumlanrig Castle, i. 168-215.

⁴Dalrymple, *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*.